



US009361761B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Maeda

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,361,761 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Jun. 7, 2016**

(54) **SERVER, COMMUNICATION SYSTEM,
METHOD FOR CONTROLLING
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM, AND
PROGRAM**

2014/0087865 A1* 3/2014 Carrico G07F 17/3211
463/29
2014/0295933 A1* 10/2014 Sano G07F 17/329
463/17
2014/0309009 A1* 10/2014 Kim G07F 17/329
463/18

(71) Applicant: **GREE, INC.**, Tokyo (JP)

(72) Inventor: **Masahito Maeda**, Tokyo (JP)

(73) Assignee: **GREE, INC.**, Tokyo (JP)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this
patent is extended or adjusted under 35
U.S.C. 154(b) by 96 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/229,511**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 28, 2014**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0295934 A1 Oct. 2, 2014

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Mar. 29, 2013 (JP) 2013-072333

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G07F 17/32 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **G07F 17/329** (2013.01); **G07F 17/326**
(2013.01); **G07F 17/3244** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC 463/17
See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

8,429,001 B2* 4/2013 Dance et al. 705/7.35
2011/0302041 A1* 12/2011 Dance et al. 705/26.1

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

JP A-2008-220984 9/2008
JP A-2008-253521 10/2008
JP A-2010-4944 1/2010
JP A-2012-38150 2/2012
JP A-2012-196424 10/2012
JP 2012-244761 A 12/2012
JP B1-5111651 1/2013
JP B1-5280579 9/2013

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Feb. 24, 2015 Office Action issued in Japanese Patent Application
No. 2014-240454.

“Online RPG Celes Arca,” *MacPeople*, Mar. 2013, p. 155, vol. 8 (with
partial translation).

“Monthly ‘Mobile mail order’ Mobile SNS wavering with ‘complete
gacha’: any impact on the ability to attract customers?,” *Monthly Net
Mail Order*, Jun. 2012, p. 47, vol. 13, No. 6 (with partial translation).
Japanese Office Action issued in Japanese Patent Application No.
2014-71900 on Jun. 17, 2014 (with translation).

* cited by examiner

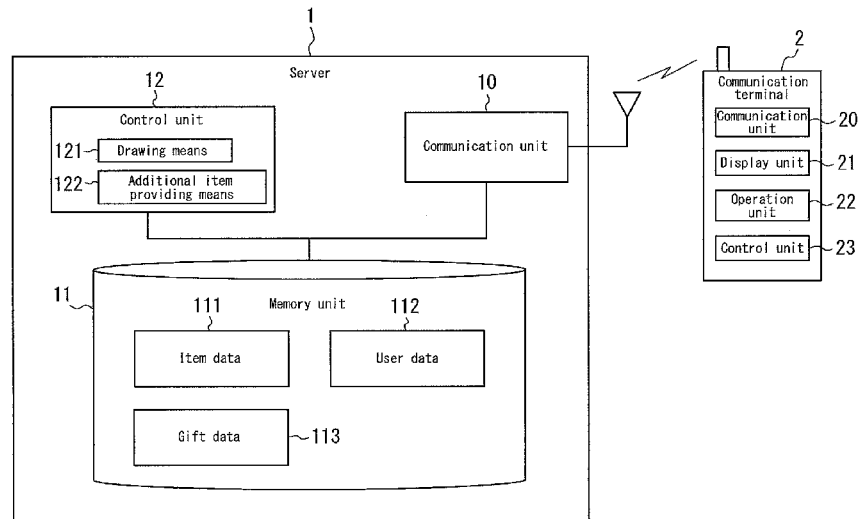
Primary Examiner — Pierre E Elisca

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Oliff PLC

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A server includes drawing means (121) for drawing an item
by lottery from among an item group including a plurality of
types of items with different scarcity values and providing the
item to a user, and additional item providing means (122) for
providing an additional item to the user in accordance with a
provision count of the number of times an item is provided by
the drawing means (121).

20 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



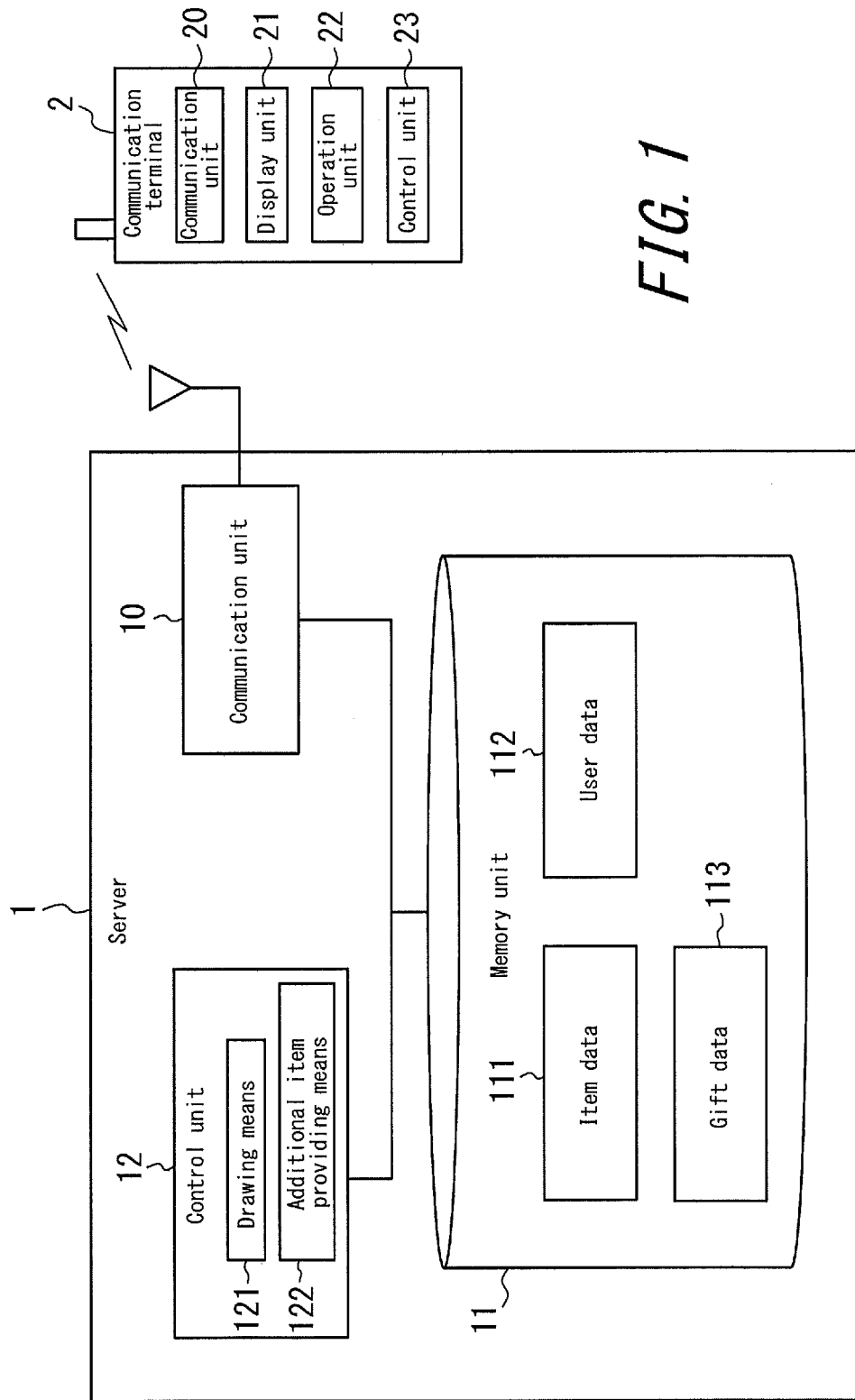


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

111

Item identification information	Item name	Item image	Attack strength	Defense strength	Item type
ITM001	Item A	Item A image	1000	500	3
ITM002	Item B	Item B image	500	300	1
ITM003	Item C	Item C image	800	400	2
ITM004	Item D	Item D image	400	400	1
ITM005	Item E	Item E image	2000	1000	4
ITM006	Item F	Item F image	500	500	2
ITM007	Item G	Item G image	400	800	2
ITM008	Item H	Item H image	500	1000	3
ITM009	Item I	Item I image	600	600	2
ITM010	Item J	Item J image	2500	2500	6
ITM011	Item K	Item K image	3000	2500	7
ITM012	Item L	Item L image	3000	3800	8
...


FIG. 3

112

User identification information	Item provision count	Information on fever state	Start time of fever state	Identification information on a provided item	Identification information on a provided item	...
UID001	4	ON	2013/2/15 13:24	ITM002	ITM004	...
UID002	2	OFF	—	ITM001	ITM010	...
UID003	5	ON	2013/2/17 14:01	ITM007	ITM009	...
...

FIG. 4

113



Item provision count	Item identification information
1	ITM100
2	ITM101
3	ITM102
...	...

FIG. 5

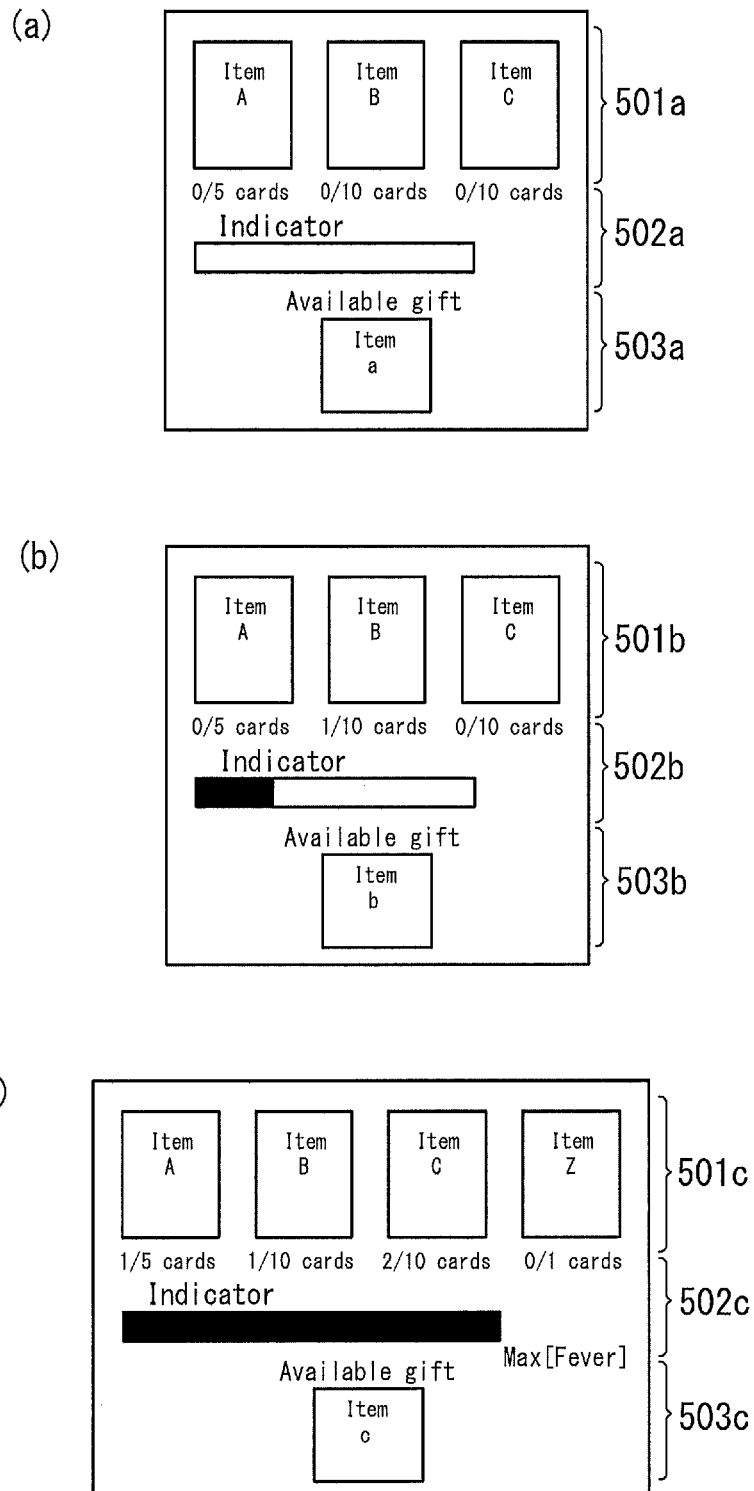
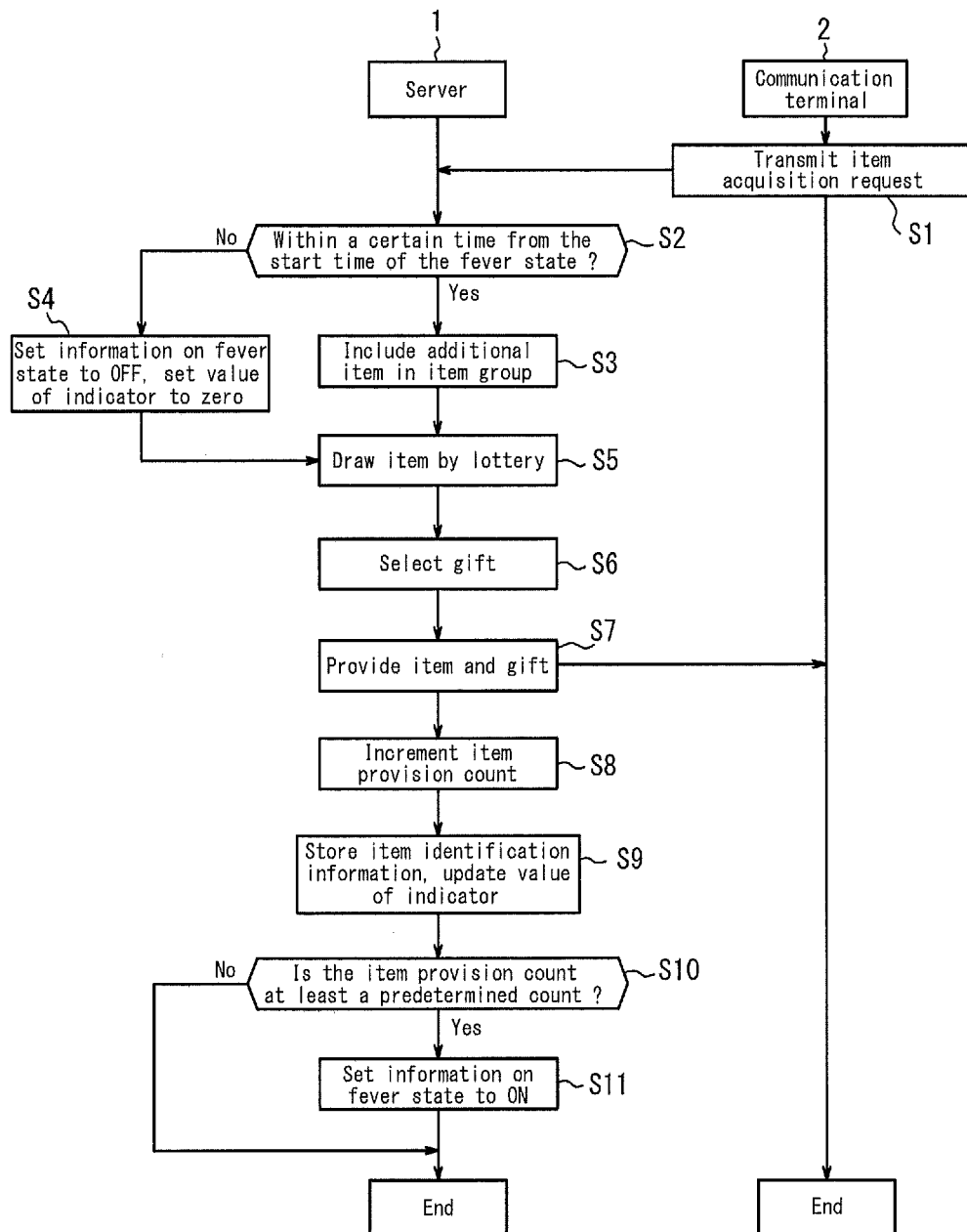


FIG. 6

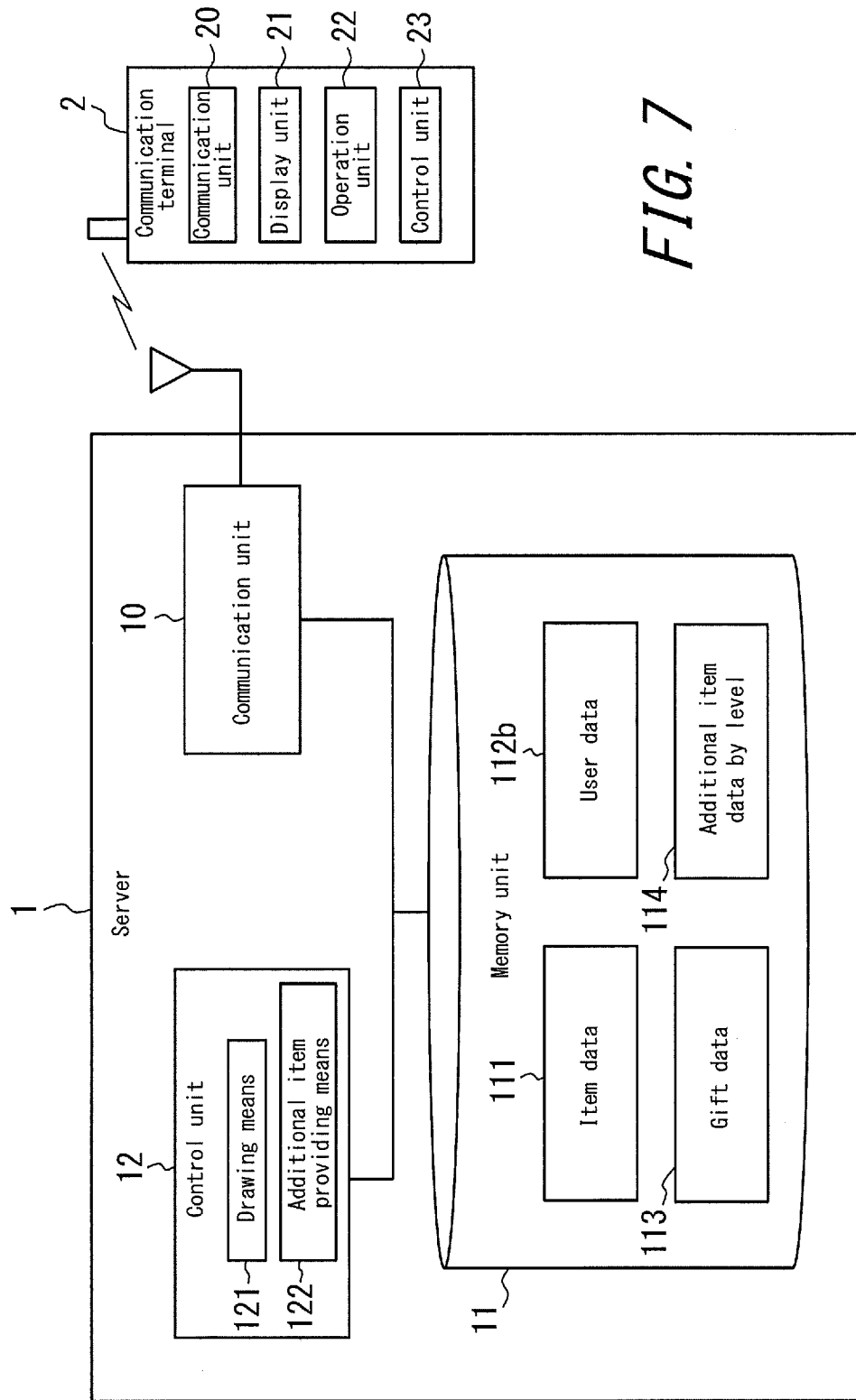


FIG. 7


FIG. 8

112b

User identification information	Item provision count	Level	Identification information on a provided item	Identification information on a provided item	...
UID001	4	2	ITM002	ITM004	...
UID002	2	1	ITM001	ITM010	...
UID003	5	2	ITM007	ITM009	...
...

FIG. 9

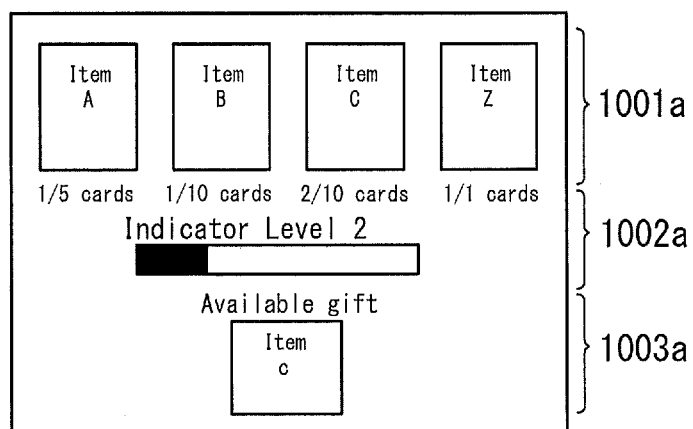
114



Level	Identification information on an additional item
1	—
2	ITM201
3	ITM202
...	...

FIG. 10

(a)



(b)

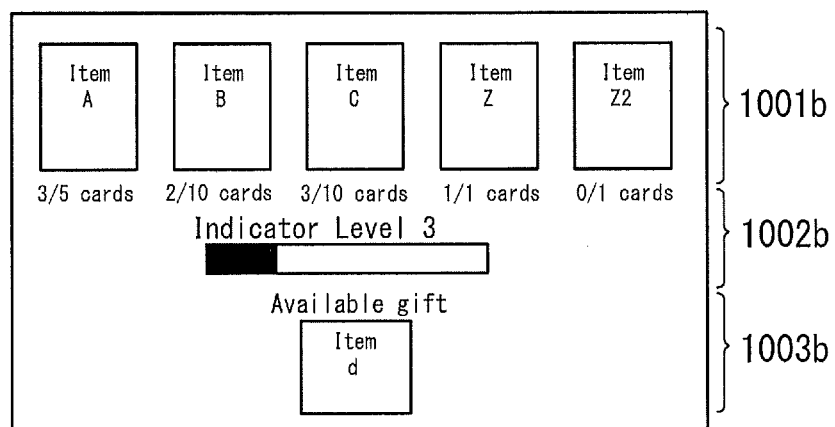
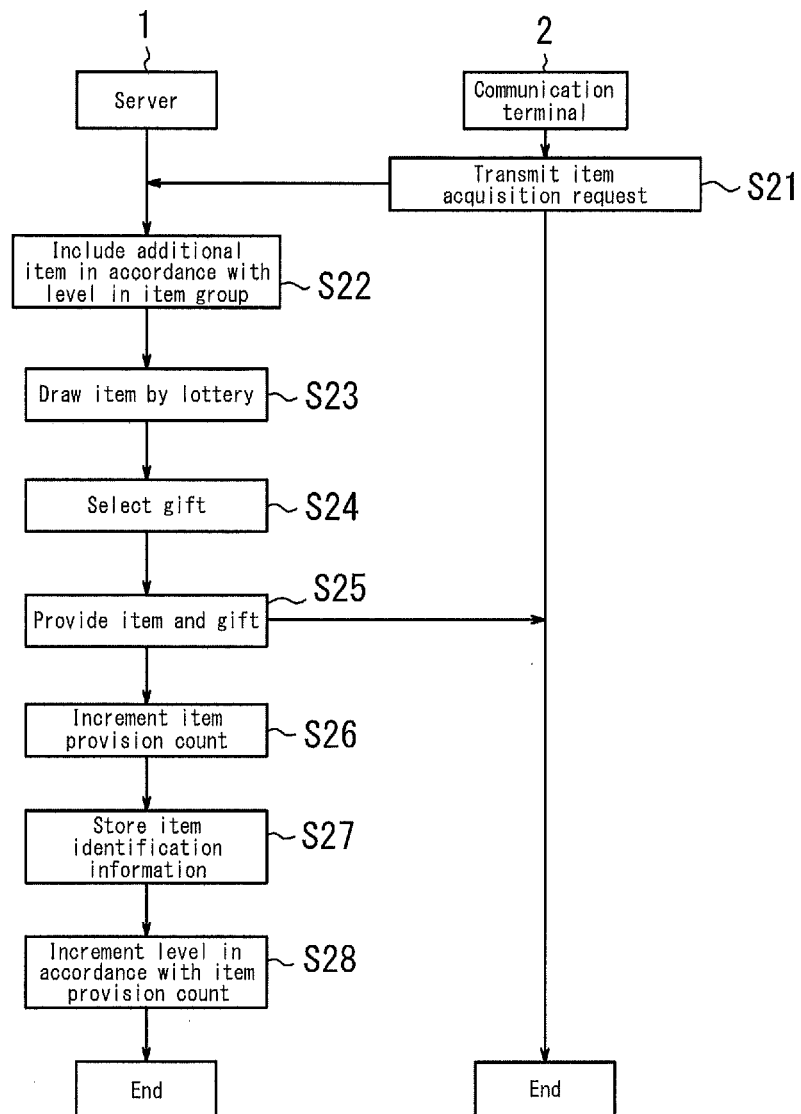


FIG. 11

1

SERVER, COMMUNICATION SYSTEM, METHOD FOR CONTROLLING COMMUNICATION SYSTEM, AND PROGRAM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority to and the benefit of Japanese Patent Application No. 2013-072333 filed Mar. 29, 2013, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a server that provides a game, to a communication system, to a method for controlling a communication system, and to a program.

BACKGROUND ART

A competitive game server has been proposed to form a player's deck from game cards or the like stored for each user in the competitive game server and to allow multiple players to compete based on the attack strength and defense strength of the deck (for example, see Patent Literature 1). In such a competitive game server, a user acquires a game card by methods such as purchasing the game card or obtaining the game card by winning a match against a competitor.

CITATION LIST

Patent Literature

Patent Literature 1: JP2008-220984A

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Technical Problem

In a conventional competitive game server, however, the methods for acquiring game cards and the like are limited, causing the user to lose interest in the game.

The present invention has been conceived in light of the above circumstances and therefore provides a server, a communication system, and a method for controlling a communication system that can increase the variations on methods for acquiring game cards and the like.

Solution to Problem

In order to resolve the above problem, a server according to the present invention includes drawing means for drawing an item by lottery from among an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values and providing the item to a user; and additional item providing means for providing an additional item to the user in accordance with a provision count of a number of times an item is provided by the drawing means.

In the server according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may provide the additional item to the user by including at least one additional item in the item group when the provision count is at least a predetermined count.

In the server according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may provide the additional item to the user by including at least one additional item in the item

2

group for a predetermined time starting when the provision count reaches at least a predetermined count.

In the server according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may provide the additional item to the user by including at least one additional item in the item group in accordance with the provision count.

In the server according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may also provide an additional item to the user in accordance with the item drawn by lottery by the drawing means.

In the server according to the present invention, the server may also transmit information on the reception count to the user.

A communication system according to the present invention includes a server and a communication terminal, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal, such that the communication terminal transmits an item acquisition request to the server, and the server provides an item to the communication terminal with drawing means for drawing the item by lottery from among an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and provides an additional item to the communication terminal with additional item providing means in accordance with a provision count of a number of times an item is provided by the drawing means.

In the communication system according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may provide the additional item to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group when the provision count is at least a predetermined count.

In the communication system according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may provide the additional item to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group for a predetermined time starting when the provision count reaches at least a predetermined count.

In the communication system according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may provide the additional item to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group in accordance with the provision count.

In the communication system according to the present invention, the additional item providing means may also provide an additional item to the communication terminal in accordance with the item drawn by lottery by the drawing means.

In the communication system according to the present invention, the server may also transmit information on the reception count to the communication terminal.

A method according to the present invention for controlling a communication system including a server and a communication terminal, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal includes the steps of (a) transmitting, by the communication terminal, an item acquisition request to the server; (b) providing, by the server, an item to the communication terminal with drawing means for drawing the item by lottery from among an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values; and (c) providing, by the server, an additional item to the communication terminal with additional item providing means in accordance with a provision count of a number of times an item is provided by the drawing means.

In the method according to the present invention for controlling a communication system, in step (c), the additional item may be provided to the communication terminal by

3

including at least one additional item in the item group when the provision count is at least a predetermined count.

In the method according to the present invention for controlling a communication system, in step (c), the additional item may be provided to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group for a predetermined time starting when the provision count reaches at least a predetermined count.

In the method according to the present invention for controlling a communication system, in step (c), the additional item may be provided to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group in accordance with the provision count.

In the method according to the present invention for controlling a communication system, in step (c), an additional item may also be provided to the communication terminal in accordance with the item drawn by lottery by the drawing means.

The method according to the present invention for controlling a communication system may further include the step of (d) transmitting, by the server, information on the reception count to the communication terminal.

A non-transitory computer readable recording medium according to the present invention stores instructions for a computer functioning as a communication terminal in a communication system including a server and the communication terminal, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal, the instructions causing the computer to perform the steps of: (a) transmitting an item acquisition request to the server; (b) receiving provision, from drawing means in the server, of an item drawn by lottery from among an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values; and (c) receiving provision, from additional item providing means in the server, of an additional item provided in accordance with a provision count of a number of times an item is provided by the drawing means.

A communication terminal according to the present invention is in a communication system including a server and the communication terminal, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal, the communication terminal including: communication means for transmitting an item acquisition request to the server, receiving provision, from drawing means in the server, of an item drawn by lottery from among an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and receiving provision, from additional item providing means in the server, of an additional item provided in accordance with a provision count of a number of times an item is provided by the drawing means.

Advantageous Effect of Invention

The server, communication system, method for controlling a communication system, and program according to the present invention increase the variations on methods for acquiring a game card or the like.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The present invention will be further described below with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a communication system according to Embodiment 1;

FIG. 2 is an example of item data according to Embodiment 1;

4

FIG. 3 is an example of user data according to Embodiment 1;

FIG. 4 is an example of additional item data according to Embodiment 1;

FIG. 5 is an image of provision of an additional item according to Embodiment 1;

FIG. 6 is flowchart of operations by the communication system according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a communication system according to Embodiment 2;

FIG. 8 is an example of user data according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention;

FIG. 9 is an example of additional item data by level according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is an image of provision of an additional item according to Embodiment 2; and

FIG. 11 is flowchart of operations by the communication system according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

The following describes embodiments of the present invention.

Embodiment 1

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a communication system according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention. The communication system according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention includes a server **1** (game server **1**) and a communication terminal **2**.

The server **1** includes a communication unit **10**, a memory unit **11**, and a control unit **12**.

The communication unit **10** communicates with the communication terminal **2** over either or both of a wireless and wired connection.

The memory unit **11** stores information on items provided to the communication terminal **2** and on the item type. An "item" refers to any of a variety of objects used within a game, such as a game card constituting a user's deck, a character, a weapon, armor, an ornament, a plant, food, and the like. The item type is a numerical value representing the scarcity value of the item, a numerical value representing the category of the item, or the like. Below, the item type is described as being a numerical value representing the scarcity value of the item, yet the item type is not limited in this way.

Specifically, the memory unit **11** stores item data **111**, user data **112**, and gift data **113**.

The item data **111** stores data on an image or the like for an item provided to the user in association with item identification information. The item identification information is an identifier for uniquely identifying an item in the present system. FIG. 2 illustrates an example of the item data **111**. As illustrated in FIG. 2, the item data for example includes item identification information "ITM001", an item name "item A", an item image "item A image", an attack strength "1000", a defense strength "500", and an item type "3". The attack strength and defense strength are parameters related to the strength of the item. The image data may be in any image format, such as JPEG, GIF, PNG, or the like.

In general terms, the user data **112** stores, for each piece of user identification information, a count of the number of times the server **1** has provided an item to the communication terminal **2** and information on the provided items. Specifically, the user data **112** stores, in association, the user identification information, item provision count, and identification information on a provided item. The user identification information is an identifier for uniquely identifying a user in the present system. The item provision count is a count of the

5

number of times the server **1** has provided an item to the communication terminal **2** pertaining to each piece of user identification information. The identification information on a provided item is item identification information for each item the server **1** has provided to the communication terminal **2** pertaining to each piece of user identification information.

The user data **112** more preferably includes information on a fever state. The fever state indicates a state in which the item provision count is at least a predetermined count (for example, four times or more). In general terms, in the present embodiment, an incentive is provided during the fever state, such as additionally providing the user with an item (referred to below as an additional item). Preferably, the fever state is maintained for a predetermined time, and in this case, the user data **112** stores the start time of the fever state.

FIG. **3** illustrates an example of the user data **112**. As illustrated in FIG. **3**, the user data **112** for example includes "UID001" as the user identification information, "4" as the item provision count, "ON" as the information on the fever state, "Feb. 15, 2013 13:24" as the start time of the fever state, and "ITM002" and "ITM004" as the identification information on a provided item. Note that the information on the fever state is one of two values, either "ON" or "OFF". "ON" indicates that the user is in the fever state, and "OFF" indicates that the user is not in the fever state.

The gift data **113** stores information on gifts provided to the user. A gift is an additional item that the server **1** provides to the user in accordance with the item provision count. FIG. **4** illustrates an example of the gift data **113**. As illustrated in FIG. **4**, the gift data **113** for example includes "1" as the item provision count, "ITM100" as the item identification information, and the like. Preferably, as the item provision count is higher, the server **1** provides the user with an item having a higher item type as a gift.

The control unit **12** includes drawing means **121** and additional item providing means **122** and performs a variety of control pertaining to the server **1**. Upon receiving an item acquisition request from the communication terminal **2**, the control unit **12** uses the drawing means **121** to draw, by lottery, an item for provision and to provide the drawn item. The item acquisition request includes the user identification information, so that the control unit **12** can determine the user from which the item acquisition request was received. When the control unit **12** receives an item acquisition request from the communication terminal **2**, the drawing means **121** draws an item, by lottery, from among an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values. The item group is, for example, composed of items of item type three or less. The item group may include a plurality of the same item. The drawing means **121** refers to the user data **112** to draw an item, by lottery, from among items in the item group that have not yet been provided to the user.

The control unit **12** provides the item drawn by the drawing means **121** to the user, i.e. to the communication terminal **2**. Specifically, based on the item data **111**, the control unit **12** transmits the item image corresponding to the item identification information for the provided item to the communication terminal **2** via the communication unit **10**. Each time an item is provided to the communication terminal **2**, the control unit **12** increments the item provision count in the user data **112** by one. When providing an item to the communication terminal **2**, the control unit **12** also stores the item identification information for the item in the user data **112** as identification information on a provided item. Furthermore, when the item provision count in the user data **112** is at least a predetermined count, the control unit **12** stores a value of "ON" for the information on the fever state.

6

Upon receiving an item acquisition request from the communication terminal **2**, the control unit **12** also uses the additional item providing means **122** to select an additional item (gift) corresponding to the item provision count and to provide the additional item to the user.

Specifically, the additional item providing means **122** refers to the gift data **113** and selects an additional item to provide to the user in accordance with the item provision count. The control unit **12** then provides the additional item to the user. Based on the item data **111**, the control unit **12** transmits the item image corresponding to the identification information on an additional item to the communication terminal **2** via the communication unit **10**.

FIG. **5** is an image of the above-described provision of an additional item. Preferably, this image is displayed on the communication terminal **2** as a screen for requesting item acquisition. The screen for requesting item acquisition is a user interface for transmitting an item acquisition request to the server **1**. Note that when this image is displayed on the communication terminal **2** as a screen for requesting item acquisition, the screen is provided with a button for transmitting an item request (not illustrated). With this screen, the user can confirm which additional item can be acquired when requesting an additional item with the communication terminal **2**.

FIG. **5(a)** is an image including identification information on a provided item for a user with an item provision count of zero, information on the item provision count, and information on an additional item that will be provided. In area **501a**, the number of provisions of each item in the item group is displayed. In FIG. **5(a)**, the number of provisions of item A, item B, and item C is 0/5 cards, 0/10 cards, and 0/10 cards respectively. The denominator is the total number of each item included in the item group, and the numerator is the number of items provided. In area **502a**, information on the item provision count is displayed. In FIG. **5**, this information is displayed as an indicator. The value of the indicator increases in proportion to the item provision count. Specifically, the value of the indicator increases by one notch each time the item provision count increases by one, and when the item provision count reaches a predetermined value (for example, four), the value of the indicator reaches its maximum value. In area **503a**, information on the gift to be provided by the additional item providing means **122** for the current item provision count is displayed. In FIG. **5(a)**, provision of the gift "item a" is displayed.

By contrast, FIG. **5(b)** is an image including identification information on a provided item for a user with an item provision count that is not zero, information on the item provision count, and information on an additional item that will be provided. As shown in area **501b**, the number of provisions of item A, item B, and item C is 0/5 cards, 1/10 cards, and 0/10 cards respectively. The value of the indicator in area **502b** is greater than the value shown in FIG. **5(a)**, since the item provision count is one. In area **503b**, information on the additional item to be provided by the additional item providing means **122** for the current item provision count is displayed. In FIG. **5(b)**, provision of the gift "item b" is displayed.

Furthermore, when the item provision count is at least a predetermined count, the additional item providing means **122** provides the user with an additional item by including at least one additional item in the item group. Specifically, the control unit **12** refers to the user data **112**, and when the user pertaining to the item acquisition request is in the fever state and is within a certain time from the start time of the fever state (for example, within one hour), the control unit **12** uses

the additional item providing means **122** to include at least one additional item in the item group. The additional item that is added is preferably an item with an item type of 4 or greater. FIG. 5(c) is an image of provision of this additional item. As shown in area **501c** of FIG. 5(c), the number of provisions of item A, item B, and item C is 1/5 cards, 1/10 cards, and 2/10 cards respectively. As also shown in area **502c**, the value of the indicator is at the maximum value. This indicates that the item provision count is at least a predetermined value (four). In this case, the user is in the fever state, and "MAX (Fever)" is displayed near the indicator. At this time, as displayed in the area **501c**, item Z has been added to the item group. When the user pertaining to the item acquisition request is in the fever state and a certain time has elapsed from the start time of the fever state, the control unit **12** rewrites the fever state in the user data **112** to be "OFF". The control unit **12** also sets the value of the indicator to zero.

The communication terminal **2** includes a communication unit **20**, a display unit **21**, an operation unit **22**, and a control unit **23**.

The communication unit **20** communicates with the server **1** over either or both of a wireless and wired connection. Specifically, based on user operation of the operation unit **22**, the communication unit **20** transmits an item acquisition request to the server **1**. The communication unit **20** also receives provision of an item corresponding to the item acquisition request from the server **1**.

The display unit **21** is configured using a liquid crystal display, an organic EL display, or the like and outputs display pertaining to the game provided by the server **1**. For example, the display unit **21** displays the item image pertaining to an item provided by the server **1**.

The operation unit **22** is configured using buttons, a touch panel, or the like, and receives input signals from the user during the game. The operation unit **22** also transmits the input signals received from the user to the control unit **23**.

The control unit **23** performs a variety of control pertaining to the communication terminal **2**. For example, based on user operation of the operation unit **22**, the control unit **23** transmits an item acquisition request to the server **1** via the communication unit **20**.

Next, operations of the communication system according to Embodiment 1 are described using the flowchart in FIG. 6.

First, based on user operation of the operation unit **22**, the control unit **23** in the communication terminal **2** transmits an item acquisition request to the server **1** via the communication unit **20** (step S1).

Next, when the server **1** receives the item acquisition request, the additional item providing means **122** of the control unit **12** refers to the user data **112** to determine whether the user pertaining to the item acquisition request is within a certain time (for example, within one hour) from the start time of the fever state (step S2). When the user is within a certain time from the start time of the fever state, the control unit **12** uses the additional item providing means **122** to include at least one additional item in the item group (step S3). Conversely, when the user is not within a certain time from the start time of the fever state, i.e. when a certain time has elapsed from the start time of the fever state, the control unit **12** rewrites the fever state in the user data **112** to be "OFF" and sets the value of the indicator to zero (step S4).

Next, the control unit **12** uses the drawing means **121** to draw an item, by lottery, from among the item group. The drawing means **121** refers to the user data **112** to draw an item, by lottery, from among items in the item group that have not yet been provided to the user (step S5).

Next, the additional item providing means **122** refers to the user data **112**, and in accordance with the item provision count, selects a gift (additional item) to provide to the user based on the gift data **113** (step S6). The control unit **12** then provides the item drawn by the drawing means **121** and the gift selected by the additional item providing means **122** to the user. Specifically, based on the item data **111**, the control unit **12** transmits the item images corresponding to the item identification information for the provided item and the gift to the communication terminal **2** via the communication unit **10** (step S7).

Next, the control unit **12** increments the item provision count in the user data **112** by one and updates the value of the indicator (step S8). Specifically, the control unit **12** increases the value of the indicator by one notch. The control unit **12** also stores the item identification information for the item in the user data **112** as identification information on a provided item (step S9).

Next, the control unit **12** determines whether the item provision count in the user data **112** is at least a predetermined count (step S10). When the item provision count is at least a predetermined count, the control unit **12** stores a value of "ON" for the information on the fever state and stores the start time of the fever state (step S11). Processing then ends.

According to Embodiment 1 of the present invention, the control unit **12** of the server **1** uses the additional item providing means **122** to provide an additional item in accordance with the item provision count. Therefore, the variations on methods for acquiring game cards and the like can be increased.

Note that the control unit **12** of the server **1** may further provide an additional item to the user in accordance with the item drawn by the drawing means **121**. Specifically, for example when the item drawn by the drawing means **121** is less than a predetermined item type, the control unit **12** may provide a predetermined item (item request ticket or the like) to the user. The control unit **12** preferably provides the predetermined item to the user when the rank of the item drawn by the drawing means **121** is the lowest. The rank of the item is calculated by totaling a variety of parameters or the like of the item. Suppose, for example, that the item with the lowest rank is item B. When the item drawn by the drawing means **121** is item B, i.e. the item with the lowest rank, the control unit **12** provides the predetermined item to the user.

The server **1** may be configured to receive a reset request at any time from the communication terminal **2**. In general terms, the reset request is a request for resetting the identification information on a provided item in the user data **112**. Upon receiving a reset request from the communication terminal **2**, the control unit **12** of the server **1** deletes the identification information on a provided item corresponding to the user identification information of the communication terminal **2**. With this configuration, for example when an item within the item group is depleted, the information on provided items can be reset, so that the item can be acquired again. Upon a reset request, the item provision count is preferably left as is, without being returned to zero. In this way, even upon a reset, the possibility of acquiring an additional item can be maintained.

In the present embodiment, the server **1** provides an additional item (gift) to the user in accordance with the item provision count and includes the additional item in the item group, yet the additional item may be provided to the user in either of these ways. For example, it is possible only to provide an additional item (gift) in accordance with the item provision count. In this case, step S2 through step S4 in FIG. 6 are omitted. It is also possible, for example, only to include

an additional item in the item group in accordance with the item provision count (when in the fever state). In this case, step S6 in FIG. 6 is omitted, and in step S7, the server 1 only provides the item to the communication terminal 2. Furthermore, in the present embodiment, the additional item is included in the item group, yet alternatively the additional item may be provided to the user from a new item group including a plurality of additional items. In other words, a new item group may be caused to appear only when in the fever state. Furthermore, when in the fever state, the user may be allowed to select whether an item is to be provided from the item group from which items were provided before the fever state or from the new item group.

In the present embodiment, the value of the indicator increases in proportion to the item provision count, yet the indicator is not limited in this way. For example, the value of the indicator may increase by one notch for an item provision count of one, three notches for an item provision count of two, and five notches for an item provision count of three. The value of the indicator may thus be caused to increase by a different amount depending on the item provision count.

As another example of the value of the indicator not increasing in proportion to the item provision count, the amount of increase in the indicator may be determined randomly at the time of item provision. When adopting this configuration, the control unit 12 of the server 1 determines that the user is in the fever state when the value of the indicator reaches the maximum value (for example, four notches).

Embodiment 2

The following describes Embodiment 2 of the present invention. FIG. 7 is a block diagram illustrating the structure of a communication system according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention. The same reference signs are provided for the same components as in Embodiment 1, and a description thereof is omitted. As compared to the structure of Embodiment 1, the communication system according to Embodiment 2 differs in that the memory unit 11 includes user data 112b and additional item data by level 114, and in that an additional item is provided in accordance with level. The level is a parameter that increases at each predetermined item provision count.

FIG. 8 illustrates an example of the user data 112b. As illustrated in FIG. 8, the user data 112b for example includes "UID001" as the user identification information, "4" as the item provision count, "2" as the level, and "ITM002" and "ITM004" as the identification information on a provided item. In the example illustrated in FIG. 8, the level increases by one, i.e. 2, 3, 4, . . . , each time the item provision count reaches a multiple of four, i.e. 4, 8, 12,

The control unit 12 of the server 1 in Embodiment 2 uses the additional item providing means 122 to provide an additional item to the user by including, in the item group, at least one additional item determined in accordance with the user's level. FIG. 9 illustrates an example of the additional item data by level 114. As illustrated in FIG. 9, the additional item data by level 114 includes "1" for the level and "-" for the identification information on an additional item, "2" for the level and "ITM201" for the identification information on an additional item, and so forth. Identification information on an additional item of "-" indicates that an additional item is not included in the item group. In other words, when the level is "1", an additional item is not included in the item group. Using the additional item providing means 122, the control unit 12 refers to the additional item data by level 114 and determines the additional item.

FIG. 10 is an image of provision of an additional item in Embodiment 2. Preferably, this image is displayed on the

communication terminal 2 as a screen for requesting item acquisition. Note that when this image is displayed on the communication terminal 2 as a screen for requesting item acquisition, the screen is provided with a button for transmitting an item request (not illustrated).

FIG. 10(a) is an image for when the level is "2". In area 1001a, the number of provisions of each item in the item group is shown. The number of provisions of item A, item B, item C, and item Z is 1/5 cards, 1/10 cards, 2/10 cards, and 1/1 card respectively. The indicator in area 1002a shows a value corresponding to an item provision count of "5". The value of the indicator is reset each time the level increases, and the current level is shown near the indicator. When this screen is displayed on the communication terminal 2, the indicator allows the user easily to grasp the item provision count necessary to rise to the next level. In area 1003a, information on the gift to be provided by the additional item providing means 122 for the current item provision count is displayed. In FIG. 10(a), provision of the gift "item c" is displayed.

FIG. 10(b) is an image for when the level is "3". In area 1001b, the number of provisions of each item in the item group is shown. The number of provisions of item A, item B, item C, item Z, and item Z2 is 3/5 cards, 5/10 cards, 3/10 cards, 1/1 card, and 0/1 card respectively. In FIG. 10(b), since the level has risen to "3", the item "item Z2" has been added to the item group. The indicator in area 1002b shows a value corresponding to an item provision count of "9". In area 1003b, information on the gift to be provided by the additional item providing means 122 for the current item provision count is displayed. In FIG. 10(b), provision of the gift "item d" is displayed.

Next, operations of the communication system according to Embodiment 2 are described using the flowchart in FIG. 11.

First, based on user operation of the operation unit 22, the control unit 23 in the communication terminal 2 transmits an item acquisition request to the server 1 via the communication unit 20 (step S21).

Next, when the server 1 receives the item acquisition request, the additional item providing means 122 of the control unit 12 refers to the user data 112 to retrieve the level of the user pertaining to the item acquisition request and refers to the additional item data by level 114 to include an additional item corresponding to the level in the item group (step S22).

Next, the control unit 12 draws an item, by lottery, from among the item group with the drawing means 121. The drawing means 121 refers to the user data 112 to draw an item, by lottery, from among items in the item group that have not yet been provided to the user (step S23).

Next, the additional item providing means 122 refers to the user data 112, and in accordance with the item provision count, selects a gift (additional item) to provide to the user based on the gift data 113 (step S24). The control unit 12 then provides the item drawn by the drawing means 121 and the gift selected by the additional item providing means 122 to the user. Specifically, based on the item data 111, the control unit 12 transmits the item images corresponding to the item identification information for the provided item and the gift to the communication terminal 2 via the communication unit 10 (step S25).

Next, the control unit 12 increments the item provision count in the user data 112 by one (step S26). The control unit 12 also stores the item identification information for the item in the user data 112 as identification information on a provided item (step S27).

11

Next, the control unit **12** rewrites the level in the user data **112** in accordance with the item provision count in the user data **112** (step **S28**). Processing then ends.

According to Embodiment 2 of the present invention, the control unit **12** of the server **1** uses the additional item providing means **122** to provide an additional item in accordance with the level that corresponds to the item provision count. Therefore, the variations on methods for acquiring game cards and the like can be increased.

In the present embodiment, the level rises in direct proportion to the item provision count, yet the level is not limited in this way. The item provision count necessary for rising to the next level may increase as the level becomes higher. For example, the level may increase by one, i.e. 2, 3, 4, . . . , as the item provision count reaches 4, 12, 24,

Note that after reaching a predetermined level (for example, level “2”), the item provision count and level may respectively be reset to “0” and “1” if the item provision count does not reach the count necessary for the next level (level “3”) within a certain time.

In the present embodiment, the server **1** provides an additional item (gift) to the user in accordance with the item provision count and includes an additional item in accordance with the level in the item group, yet the additional item may be provided to the user in either of these ways. For example, it is possible only to provide an additional item (gift) in accordance with the item provision count. In this case, step **S22** in FIG. **11** is omitted. It is also possible, for example, only to include an additional item in accordance with the level in the item group based on the item provision count. In this case, step **S24** in FIG. **11** is omitted, and in step **S25**, the server **1** only provides the item to the communication terminal **2**.

A computer is preferably used to function as the communication terminal **2**. A program containing the processing for achieving the functions of the communication terminal **2** is stored in the memory unit of the computer, and the functions are achieved by the central processing unit (CPU) of the computer reading and executing the program.

Although the present invention has been described by way of drawings and embodiments, it is to be noted that various changes and modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art based on the present disclosure. Therefore, such changes and modifications are to be understood as included within the scope of the present invention. For example, the functions and the like included in the various means, steps, and the like may be reordered in any logically consistent way. Furthermore, means, steps, and the like may be combined into one or divided.

For example, in Embodiments 1 and 2, an example is described in which the item data **111**, user data **112**, and gift data **113** (as well as the additional item data by level **114**) are stored in the memory unit **11** of the server **1**, and the control unit **12** functions as the drawing means **121** and the additional item providing means **122**, yet the present invention is not limited in this way. The item data **111**, user data **112**, gift data **113** (and additional item data by level **114**), drawing means **121**, and additional item providing means **122** may, for example, be provided in either the server **1** or the communication terminal **2**. Out of consideration for factors such as the burden of game processing and the performance of the server **1** and the communication terminal **2**, the item data **111**, user data **112**, gift data **113** (and additional item data by level **114**), drawing means **121**, and additional item providing means **122** may all be provided only in the server **1** or only in the communication terminal **2**.

REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

- 1: Server (game server)
- 2: Communication terminal

12

10: Communication unit

11: Memory unit

111: Item data

112, 112b: User data

113: Gift data

114: Additional item data by level

12: Control unit

121: Drawing means

122: Additional item providing means

20: Communication unit

21: Display unit

22: Operation unit

23: Control unit

501a, 502a, 503a: Area

501b, 502b, 503b: Area

601, 602, 703: Area

1201a, 1202a, 1203a: Area

1201b, 1202b, 1203b: Area

The invention claimed is:

1. A server comprising:

a memory, which stores (i) an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and (ii) a provision count of a number of times an item is provided to a use, and

a processor,

wherein the processor:

in response to a request from the user, draws an item by lottery from among the item group stored in the memory, and provides the item to the user; and

provides an additional item to the user in accordance with the provision count of a number of times.

2. The server according to claim 1, wherein the processor provides the additional item to the user by including at least one additional item in the item group when the provision count is at least a predetermined count.

3. The server according to claim 1, wherein the processor provides the additional item to the user by including at least one additional item in the item group for a predetermined time starting when the provision count reaches at least a predetermined count.

4. The server according to claim 1, wherein the processor provides the additional item to the user by including at least one additional item in the item group in accordance with the provision count.

5. The server according to claim 1, wherein the processor also provides an additional item to the user in accordance with the item drawn by lottery.

6. The server according to claim 1, wherein the server also transmits information on the reception count to the user.

7. A communication system comprising:

a server, and

a communication terminal, the communication terminal transmitting an item acquisition request to the server, wherein

the server includes (i) a memory, which stores an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and a provision count of a number of times an item is provided to the communication terminal, and (ii) a processor which:

in response to the item acquisition request from the communication terminal, draws an item by lottery from among the item group stored in the memory, and provides the item to the communication terminal, provides an additional item to the communication terminal in accordance with the provision count of a number of times.

13

8. The communication system according to claim 7, wherein the processor provides the additional item to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group when the provision count is at least a predetermined count.

9. The communication system according to claim 7, wherein the processor provides the additional item to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group for a predetermined time starting when the provision count reaches at least a predetermined count.

10. The communication system according to claim 7, wherein the processor also provides the additional item to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group in accordance with the provision count.

11. The communication system according to claim 7, wherein the processor also provides an additional item to the communication terminal in accordance with the item drawn by lottery.

12. The communication system according to claim 7, wherein the server also transmits information on the reception count to the communication terminal.

13. A method for controlling a communication system comprising a server and a communication terminal, the server including (i) a memory, which stores an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and a provision count of a number of times an item is provided to the communication terminal, and (ii) a processor, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) transmitting, by the communication terminal, an item acquisition request to the server;
- (b) in response to the item acquisition request from the communication terminal, drawing an item by lottery from among the item group stored in the memory, and providing the item to the communication terminal, the step being performed by the processor; and
- (c) providing, by the processor, an additional item to the communication terminal in accordance with the provision count of a number of times.

14. The method according to claim 13, wherein in step (c), the additional item is provided to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group when the provision count is at least a predetermined count.

15. The method according to claim 13, wherein in step (c), the additional item is provided to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group for a predetermined time starting when the provision count reaches at least a predetermined count.

14

16. The method according to claim 13, wherein in step (c), the additional item is provided to the communication terminal by including at least one additional item in the item group in accordance with the provision count.

17. The method according to claim 13, wherein in step (c), an additional item is also provided to the communication terminal in accordance with the item drawn by lottery.

18. The method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of (d) transmitting, by the server, information on the reception count to the communication terminal.

19. A non-transitory computer readable recording medium storing instructions for a computer functioning as a communication terminal in a communication system including a server and the communication terminal, the server including (i) a memory, which stores an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and a provision count of a number of times an item is provided to the communication terminal, and (ii) a processor, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal, the instructions causing the computer to perform the steps of:

- (a) transmitting an item acquisition request to the server;
- (b) receiving an item drawn by lottery from among the item group stored in the memory, the processor drawing the item by lottery, and the item drawn by lottery being sent by the server; and
- (c) receiving an additional item provided in accordance with the provision count of a number of times, the additional item being selected by the processor and sent by the server.

20. A communication terminal in a communication system comprising a server and the communication terminal, the server including (i) a memory, which stores an item group including a plurality of types of items with different scarcity values, and a provision count of a number of times an item is provided to the communication terminal, and (ii) a processor, the server providing an item to the communication terminal in response to a request from the communication terminal, the communication terminal comprising:

- a communication terminal that (i) transmits an item acquisition request to the server, (ii) receives an item drawn by lottery from among the item group, the processor drawing the item by lottery, and the item drawn by the lottery being sent by the server, and (iii) receives an additional item provided in accordance with the provision count of a number of times, the additional item being selected by the processor and sent by the server.

* * * * *